

DANIDA OFFICIAL RECOUNTS HORRIFYING EXPERIENCE

Outlawed syndicate abducted him for ransom

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

An official of Danida, who was rescued from a two-week captivity on July 8, blamed an unidentified outlawed syndicate for engaging poverty-stricken tribal teenagers to abduct him for ransom.

While narrating his horrifying experience to the media at Chittagong Cantonment yesterday, Danida Programme Officer Hossain Shahid Suman said continued combing operation of the security forces and the support of the tribal people forced the abductors to release him at a time when he almost gave up the hope for life.

Suman was abducted along with his driver while attending a coordinator meeting of NGOs at Khyabupurara village near Thanchi upazila headquarters in Bandarban district on June 25.

"I was on a hilltop Machan (a

platform on bamboo structure) when four gunmen appeared there asking for a foreign official of Danida who was supposed to attend the meeting," said Suman.

"As my foreign colleague was absent, they took me along with my driver Hanif down the hill where another eight people, all wearing black clothes and wielding weapons, joined them," he said.

The kidnappers, six had sophisticated AK 47 assault guns, two had revolver and pistol while the rest had sharp weapons with them.

"They took away my mobile, money amounting to around Tk 11,000 and ATM card before they forced us to board a boat, and after a 45-minute ride we got off the boat and began to walk through the rugged hilly terrain," said Suman.

He quoted the kidnappers as saying that they need money for procuring firearms and this

he added.

"They made makeshift shades with polythene paper and bamboo to pass the night and offered us half-boiled rice with snails or crabs that we could hardly take," he said.

"On the 3rd night, driver Hanif managed to flee and that prompted the kidnappers to start fleeing to the dense forest," he added.

"The next four days passed in the same way when I tried to know about the abductors and their motive," said Suman.

They identified themselves as members of Pahari People's Army (PPA) and said they get a monthly salary of Tk 120 each.

The kidnappers were Marma and Tripura and appeared to have developed a hatred for Chakma, said Suman.

He quoted the kidnappers as saying that they need money for procuring firearms and this

prompted them for abduction to realise ransom.

They said they expected to realise Tk 1 crore in ransom from the foreigner they targeted to abduct and Tk 30 to 40 lakh for his release.

"One morning when the kidnappers were preparing to cook food while the rest went out to stand guard, an exchange of gunfire could be heard," said Suman.

"It prompted the men who were holding me hostage to run away leaving me behind," he added.

"As they did not return, I ventured to leave the place and came to a stream where I got faint," he went on.

"A 20-member patrol team of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) found me nearly dead lying on a stone in a stream Singapajhiri, which was some 110km away from Bandarban district at around 10:30am on July 08," he added.



Participants at a roundtable on 'Coal policy of Bangladesh: Present context' held at The Daily Star office in the city yesterday. The weekly Shaptahik 2000 organised the event. (Story on Page 16)

Fraud brokers swindle

FROM PAGE 1

submitted their passports and two filled-up forms three months ago to a broker in Mirpur for Korean language training for going to South Korea.

He said the name of the training institute was not even mentioned. Asked if they learned the language, he said the broker told them that they themselves would have to hire a teacher to learn the language.

"Three months ago the broker said we could go to Korea in two months, but there has been no progress till now," he said adding that a number of people in Bikrampur also paid money to such brokers.

The broker told the prospective workers that they will have to pay Tk 8 lakh to Tk 8.5 lakh to go to South Korea, Anisur Rahman said.

Meanwhile, Mahtab Alam, a businessman from Islampur in the capital said there are dozens of brokers who are actively involved in cheating hundreds of people with similar promises.

"These brokers have been sending people to various countries for a long time. People interested to go to South Korea therefore also have reasons to believe that their promises are authentic," he said.

The Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment in a recent circular said some vested interest groups are trying to create

problems in the process of exporting manpower to South Korea to tarnish the image of Bangladesh Overseas Employment Services Limited (BOESL), a state owned recruiting agency, which is the only company authorised to send workers to that country.

BOESL and the South Korean Ministry of Labour are entitled to arrange recruitment of workers for that country under a special system called Employment Permit System (EPS). A memorandum of understanding (MoU) in this regard was signed on June 4 between Bangladesh and South Korea.

"There is no scope for any other recruiting agency to send Bangladeshi workers to South Korea now," said Abdul Matin Chowdhury, secretary to the expatriates' welfare ministry. Many formalities, including fixing the migration cost and medical tests are yet to be planned and determined, he noted.

Talking about the procedure, he said the government will make public through television and newspapers the amount of money that will be required for going to South Korea. The amount will be fixed jointly by Bangladesh and South Korea, he said.

Those interested to go to South Korea will have to undergo a Korean language proficiency test which will be conducted in Bangladesh by the Korean labour ministry, Matin Chowdhury added.

Only those who will pass the test will be included on the roster, he said adding that the workers will then have to fill up a form giving their detailed information and desired salaries. Only the workers selected by South Korean employers will be sent to that country.

He cautioned interested candidates not to pay any money to any broker or agency for the purpose of migrating to South Korea, because there is no scope for any private agency to be involved in the process directly or indirectly.

South Korea will hire workers for sectors like agriculture, construction, fisheries and services, he said adding that they cannot say exactly the number of workers South Korea will take.

"The number will depend on how many workers pass the tests," he said.

Korea presently has a plan to hire 10,000 workers from Bangladesh, Myanmar, Kyrgyzstan and East Timor under EPS, he added.

20 injured as RMG workers clash in Gazipur Factory ransacked

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

At least 20 workers were injured and a garment factory was ransacked during clashes between workers of two garment factories in Gazipur yesterday morning.

The clash erupted at around 9:30am after workers of Stockholm Knitwear Ltd. beat up two workers of Merchant Sweater over allegations that the two teased female workers of Stockholm Knitwear, witnesses said.

Both the factories are in the same building at Bhogra in Sadar Upazila. Stockholm Knitwear is on the first floor and the Merchant Sweater is on the second floor of the Islam Tower.

Hearing the news of beating, hundreds of workers of Merchant Sweater attacked the Stockholm Knitwear factory and vandalised 16 knitting machines and pieces of cloths, sources said.

Later, the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and police stepped in to bring the situation under control.

The law enforcers also brought the authorities of the two factories to a negotiating table at noon and settled the issue. They reached a decision that the Merchant Sweater will pay Tk 2 lakh compensation to Stockholm Knitting and action will be taken against the workers responsible.



Qulhwani of Faezul Huq today

UNB, Dhaka

Qulhwani of former state minister for jute AK Faezul Huq will be held at his Baridhara residence after Asr prayers today.

Relatives, friends and admirers have been requested to attend the qulhwani.

Faezul Huq, the son of Sher-e-Bangla AK Faezul Huq, passed away due to a cardiac arrest at a city hospital on Thursday at the age of 64.

Enumeration of voter list begins in Rajshahi July 29

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Enumeration of the voter list with photographs is likely to begin in Rajshahi on July 29.

Sources said two election commissioners are coming to Rajshahi today on a two-day visit to see the preparations for the enumeration.

The commissioners are Sahul Hossain and Brig Gen (retd) M Shakhawat Hossain.

On the first day, they will meet government officials and will exchange views with the local elites on the following day.

Bangladeshi selected for zero gravity flight

BSS, Dhaka

Rafiqul Islam, a Bangladeshi student, has been selected for Zero Gravity Flight by World Space Week Association based in Houston USA.

World Space Week Association arranges Zero Gravity Flight free of cost under 'Youth Inspiration Programme' for meritorious students.

This year 4 students have been selected from Bangladesh, Thailand, Colombia and Czech Republic, said a press release of Bangladesh Astronomical Society yesterday.

They will ride on a special plane on October 6, 2007 in Las Vegas Nevada, USA, which will make several parabolic dives up to 45,000 feet altitude to create zero gravity simulation. The students will be floating like birds for 20 to 25 seconds.

Syed Nazimuddin, senior vice-president of Bank Asia, speaks at a press conference on Rangs building at a city hotel yesterday. On his left are Maj (retd) Abdul Fattah, Kutub Uddin, corporate manager of Rangs, Habibur Rahman, director of Rangs Pharmaceuticals, and Dr Yunus Khan Majlish. (Story on Page 1)

EC to get all-out support for holding free, fair polls

Says foreign adviser

BSS, Dhaka

Foreign Affairs Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury yesterday said the present caretaker government would extend all-out cooperation and support to the Election Commission (EC) for implementing its July 15 election road map for free, fair and credible polls.

"The elections to the 9th Jatiya Sangsad will be held as per the schedule that has been already announced," he said while addressing an award giving function of the Television Reporters' Association of Bangladesh (TRAB) at Osmani Memorial Hall.

The adviser said the present government has successfully implemented various programmes, including constitution of the independent Election Commission, reconstitution and strengthening of the Anti-Corruption Commission and freeing the Public Service Commission from politicisation.

Besides, he said, the government is working to constitute an independent Human Rights Commission. The government is also going to formulate a law related to the Peoples' Right to Information, he said, adding, these are being done for the welfare of the people.

He said there is no denying the fact that media have extended their all-out cooperation towards discharging the responsibility of the government.

Kader Mansur chaired the

SC reopens today

UNB, Dhaka

After a 42-day annual vacation, the Supreme Court reopens today, court sources said.

The Supreme Court went on annual vacation on June 10.

Gono Forum leader Pankaj hospitalised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pankaj Bhattacharya, a presidium member of Gono Forum, was admitted to Ibrahim Cardiac Hospital in the city after suffering a heart attack on Friday.

He felt severe pain in the chest at around 5:00pm and was admitted to the Coronary Care Unit (CCU) in a critical condition.

"He had a heart attack before being admitted to the CCU," said an official of the hospital.

He is under supervision of Senior Consultant DR Tanjid Ahmed.

DHAKA TODAY

Discussion

Foundation. Time: 9:00am.

Vaio Asar

Vaio Angan, Dhaka organises Vaio Asar-17. Venue: Narigantha Prabartana. Time: 5:00pm.

Astronomical Assoc programme

Bangladesh Astronomical Association organises a programme to mark the 14th death anniversary of Prof Mohammad Abdul Jabbar, pioneer of astronomy practice in Bangladesh. Venue: Russian Cultural Centre. Time: 5:30pm.

Talk

The Asiatic Society of Bangladesh organises a special talk on contemporary art. Venue: Seminar room of the society. Time: 4:30pm.

Convention

Strong Local Government National Convention will be held. Venue: Biam

WEATHER TODAY

Light to moderate rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at most places over all the divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy to heavy rainfall is also likely at places, Met office said in a forecast.

Highest temperature 31.5 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rangpur and lowest 23.5 degree Celsius at Mongla.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:47pm today and rises at 5:23am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	25.9	25.0	89	93
Chittagong	26.0	24.9	95	93
Rajshahi	25.5	24.0	95	100
Khulna	28.5	24.5	100	93
Barisal	27.1	24.2	98	90
Sylhet	28.7	24.3	98	95
Cox's Bazar	27.5	25.0	91	94

Abdur Razzak, Momin's father, urged the authorities concerned not to accept the charge sheet and demanded more investigation into the case by any other agency but the CID.

Family members of Momin also urged the concerned authorities to ensure inclusion of OC Rafiq and other suspects in the charge sheet and conduct the case under Speedy Trial Tribunal.

The villagers spontaneously decided to honour the head of the delegation. They discussed it with the nearby chiefs and the concerned village king and decided to honour Brig Gen Rafiq as the village king. Intriguingly, they did not forget to take Jahangir's permission.

At the coronation, Rafiq was given a traditional dress, a king's crown and a thick gold chain to wear around his neck. He was handed over a sceptre and a throne to sit on.